

# Arabia

## I. Life Along the Fringes of the Desert Land

By Hamilton Fyfe

Author of "The New Spirit in Egypt"

*It best serves our editorial scheme to confine our attention here to the various emirates and sultanates included within the country called Arabia, excepting the independent kingdom of Hejaz and the sultanate of Oman, which are described under their respective headings, while the British Protectorate of Aden is included in the description of the British Empire in Asia*

THERE is no more puzzling episode in history than the sudden rise of the Arabs after they had been united by the faith and enthusiasm of Mahomet, their over-running of a large part of the world, as it was known then, their long stay in Spain, where they governed better than any succeeding rulers have done, and their lapse back into their old habits of nomad barbarism when they were driven out of Europe.

The Arabs were in the eighth and ninth centuries the most skilled architects and physicians, they were the most scientific irrigators. They left behind them systems of watering which can teach us something even to-day, and buildings that are still admired as exquisite examples of decoration and ingenuity. None of these excellences was permanent. All disappeared as soon as the Arabs returned to Arabia and to Morocco. They were not strong enough, these warriors who

had subdued Spain and fought their way through half of France, to escape subjugation by the Turks. They lost their desire for knowledge, their interest in art. The only reminder of the place

they had held among nations lay in their finely-cut features, their deep-set, steady eyes. They have the faces of men who are descended from noble ancestry.

Some have found the solution of this puzzle in the nature of the Mahomedan religion. It was among the Arabs that the Prophet was born; they were the first to embrace his doctrines. He was honoured by his own people. It was the impulse given to their ambition by his proclamation that they were destined to carry Islam into the uttermost parts of the earth, which accounted for their conquests of Persia and Syria, of Egypt and Morocco, of Spain.

Was it the unprogressive nature of the faith which checked their development after a few centuries, and doomed them to remain far in the rear of that civilization



CAMEL-BREEDER OF TEHAMA

The Tehama desert is peopled by warlike Aboosiyah tribesmen, who breed the best camels in Arabia

Photo. Major Meek



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which was founded by Christianity upon the ruins of Rome? That is one explanation of the mystery; even Arabs have lent support to it. They have pointed out that the Christian nations made themselves powerful in disregard of the teaching of Christ, that

from this is that their religion would have been more useful to them if they had let the Time-spirit work upon it and bring it into harmony with the changing thought of the ages. Instead, they still jealously oppose every attempt that is made to modify the ideas and ordinances of a prophet who lived and died thirteen hundred years ago.

There are great numbers of Arabs who live to-day just as their forefathers lived in the seventh century, when Islam was preached among them. They still submit to the instructions of the Koran, they repeat daily the five prayers which Mahomet enjoined, they abstain from wine, they observe strictly the fast of Ramadan; they make, if they possibly can, the pilgrimage to Mecca, they look upon women as inferior beings, created to serve and give pleasure to men. What is called progress is incompatible with adherence to a religion so entirely at variance with the beliefs and aspirations of the Western world.

There is much in the Moslem creed and practice which attracts those who go among the Moslem peoples. The daily worship is performed openly, wherever the worshipper may happen to be at the time appointed for it; there is no shame attaching to the recognition of God, no disinclination to pray in public without the support of a congregation. There must be good, many



SHY LITTLE MAID OF ARABY

Not only is it the first occasion she has been photographed, but her country of Southern Arabia was recently forbidden ground for white men, and she is alarmed at the stranger who points a camera at her

*Photo, Donald McLeish*

if they had obeyed His precepts as faithfully as the Arabs have kept to the faith of Mahomet, they would assuredly not have spread themselves over the world by force of arms. The lesson which certain thoughtful Arabs draw

Christians have said, in a religion which orders people to wash their feet. Hospitality, a virtue ranked high by Mahomet, is magnificently practised by his followers.

But there is between the Eastern and the Western view of life a great gulf



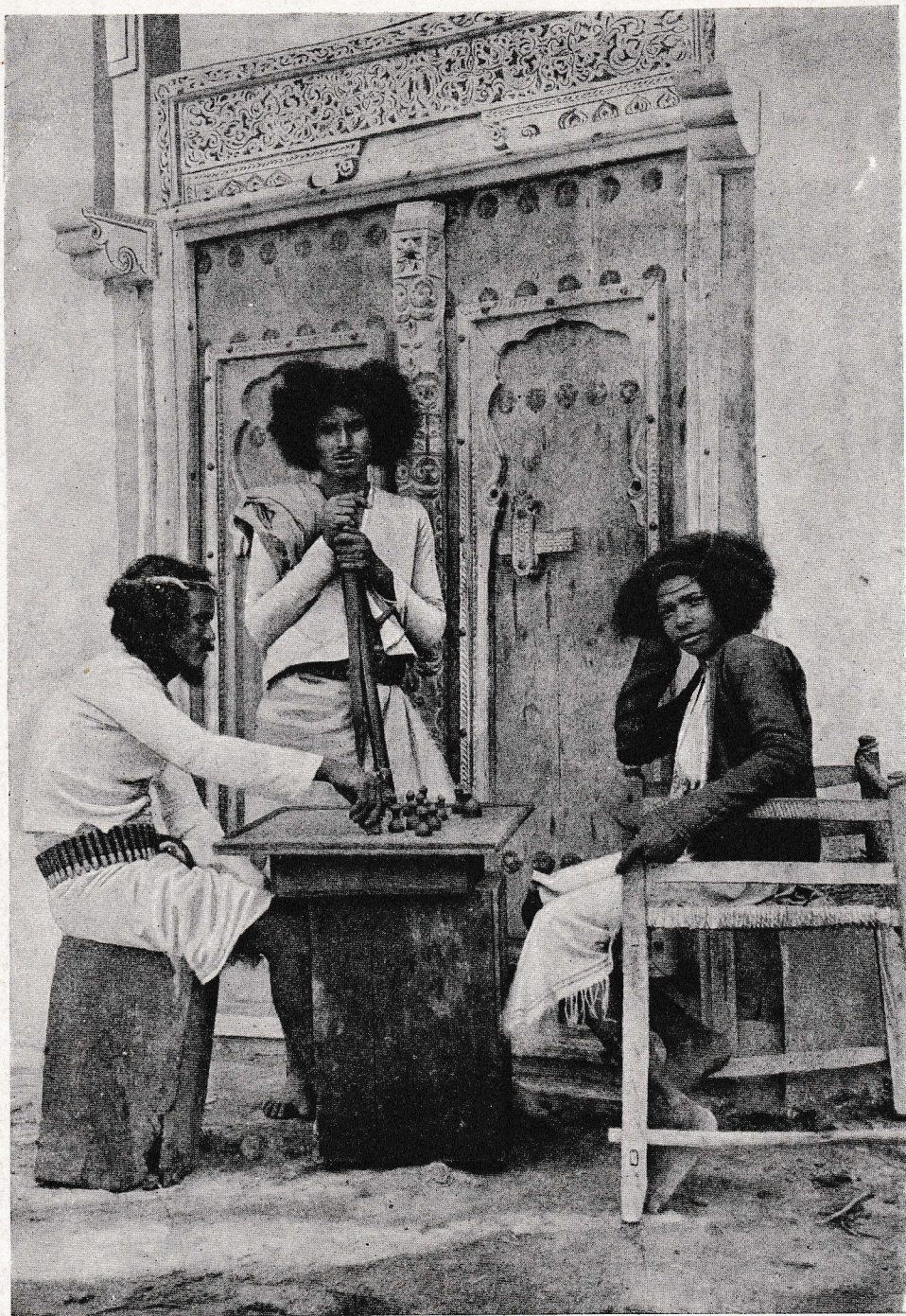


# ARAB WOMAN AND HALF-BREED CHILDREN OF THE RED SEA COAST

Like this curious group, many Yemen families along the coast show touches of negro blood. Inland as far as the town of Khailwan, the converted blacks exercise important power, and often marry with Arab girls of the poor class. This is the result of many years of Red Sea traffic in African slaves, between Abyssinia and all Arabia and beyond

*Photo Donald McLeish*



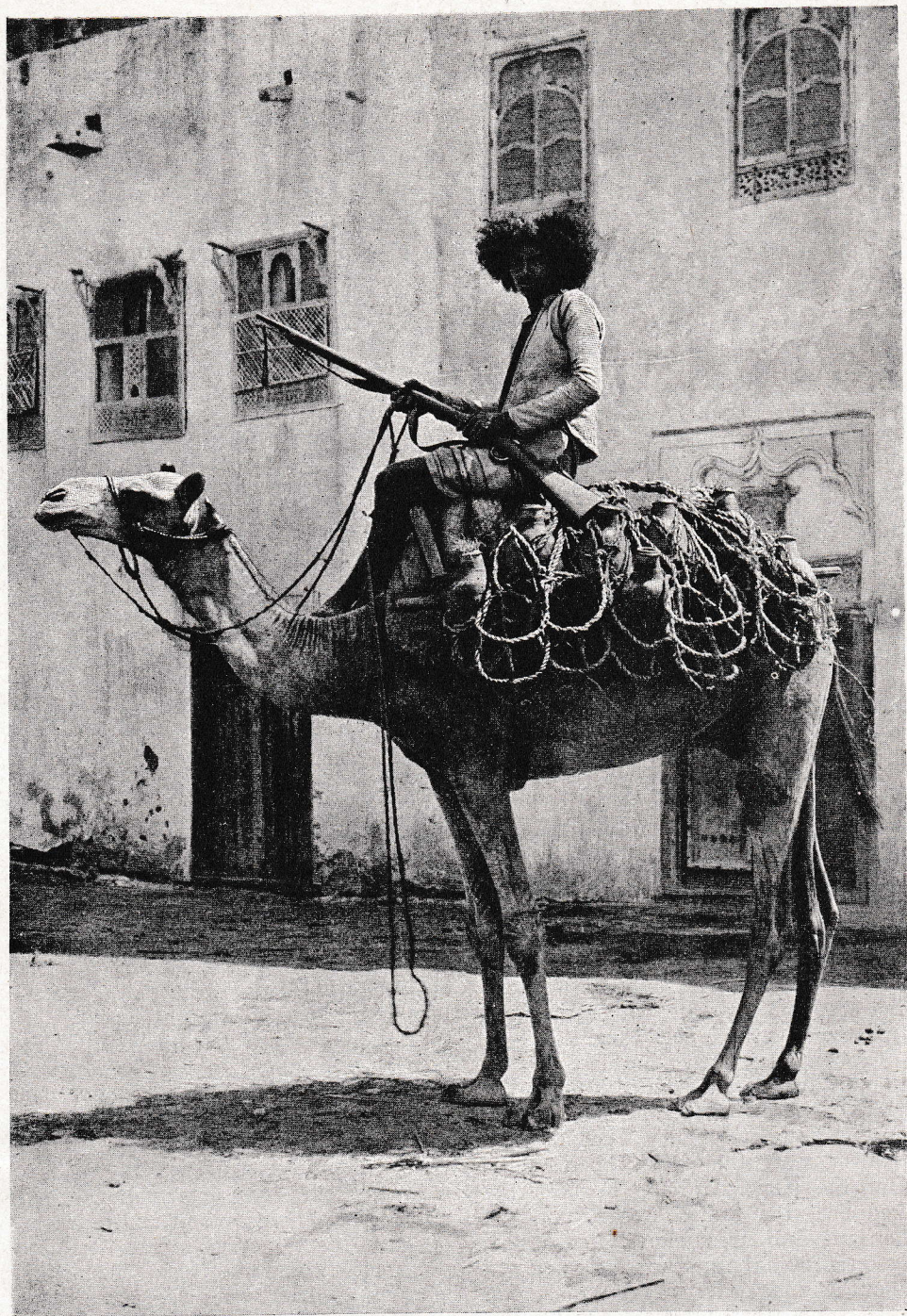


#### HAIRY HERETIC ARABS WHO REFUSE OBEDIENCE TO THE CALIPH

These are nomad Arabs of Asir and Yemen, whose ancestors rejected the authority of all Caliphs after Ali, the murdered son-in-law of the Prophet. When uniformed and trained into regular troops, they defeated the forces of the Ottoman Caliph. Two are playing the King's Game, or "Chatur Anga," an early form of chess, and all have the typical hair mop

*Photo, Donald McLeish*





#### A FIGHTING BEDUIN WATER-CARRIER WAITING AT HEADQUARTERS

He is one of the Beduin Fuzzy-Wuzzies, who fought for the Idrisi in a climate so fierce that Europeans cannot endure it. Coming of a stock bred for thousands of years to the furnace heat, the wild desert man is inured to it, and requires only his mop of hair to save him from the sunstroke that cripples invaders from a milder clime, such as Anatolians

*Photo, Donald McLeish*





#### ASIR LIBERATORS IN A FISH MARKET OF RAVAGED YEMEN

The dominating figures in this poor market scene are the Asir chief and his man. The tall, handsome leader has his long hair, of Samson-like pride, braided like that of some Abyssinian women, recalling the historic connexion between Arabia and Abyssinia. His untidy man cares little for hair-dressing; his fillet and waist-belt bandolier are sufficient display for him

*Photo, Donald McLeish*

fixed. To dispute which view leads to greater happiness is—fortunately—none of our business here. It is necessary, however, for anyone who seeks to understand the Arabs, their history and their present state, to bear in mind that this difference does exist.

Gibbon described Arabia as “a triangle of spacious dimensions in the vacant space between Persia, Syria, Egypt, and Ethiopia.” That description is correct still. But Gibbon’s belief that the peninsula lying between the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean, and the Persian Gulf was almost entirely a desert, proves that not much was known about it in his day.

Even now there are a great many who consider that what is seen of Arabia from on board ship is characteristic of the whole country. Those who make its acquaintance during a voyage to India, when their vessel stops at Aden,

bring away the impression that the gloomy hills and barren sand which they see stretching away to the mountains, giving the land, as it has been aptly said, “the appearance of a cinder heap,” are typical Arabian scenery.

If they were to cross the uninviting hills, they would soon find themselves in charming valleys, the valleys of the Yemen, where from the mountains running up to 9,000 feet in height there issues a profusion of streams, where grain and coffee are grown in abundance, apples and apricots, plums and peaches, figs and dates, oranges and lemons, vines and mulberries yield bountiful harvests of fruit, and where the wild flowers make spring and autumn a delight by their variety and charm.

The people of the Yemen are so industrious and so careful of their terraced farms and gardens that they are supposed not to be of true Arabian





#### CAPTIVE AND SHACKLED OTTOMAN BROUGHT TO A YEMEN KADI

This was in the days when a Beduin army, under the Idrisi of Asir, was liberating the land the Turks had been holding with difficulty since the rebellion of 1891. Though the Turks were fellow-Moslems, they were natural objects of intense hatred in Yemen, yet when they yielded on the field of battle their creed usually saved their lives

*Photo, Donald McLeish*

blood. The Arab has little perseverance. He will lay out a garden and let it soon fall into disorder. He will energetically prepare land for farming or stock, and then tire of his enterprise, fail to keep water flowing for irrigation, and walls in repair to prevent cattle straying. The people of the Yemen stick steadily to their task of cultivating the valleys and mountain sides which bring forth so richly many kinds of produce. They would have been rich themselves long ago if they had not been shamefully robbed by their Turkish masters.

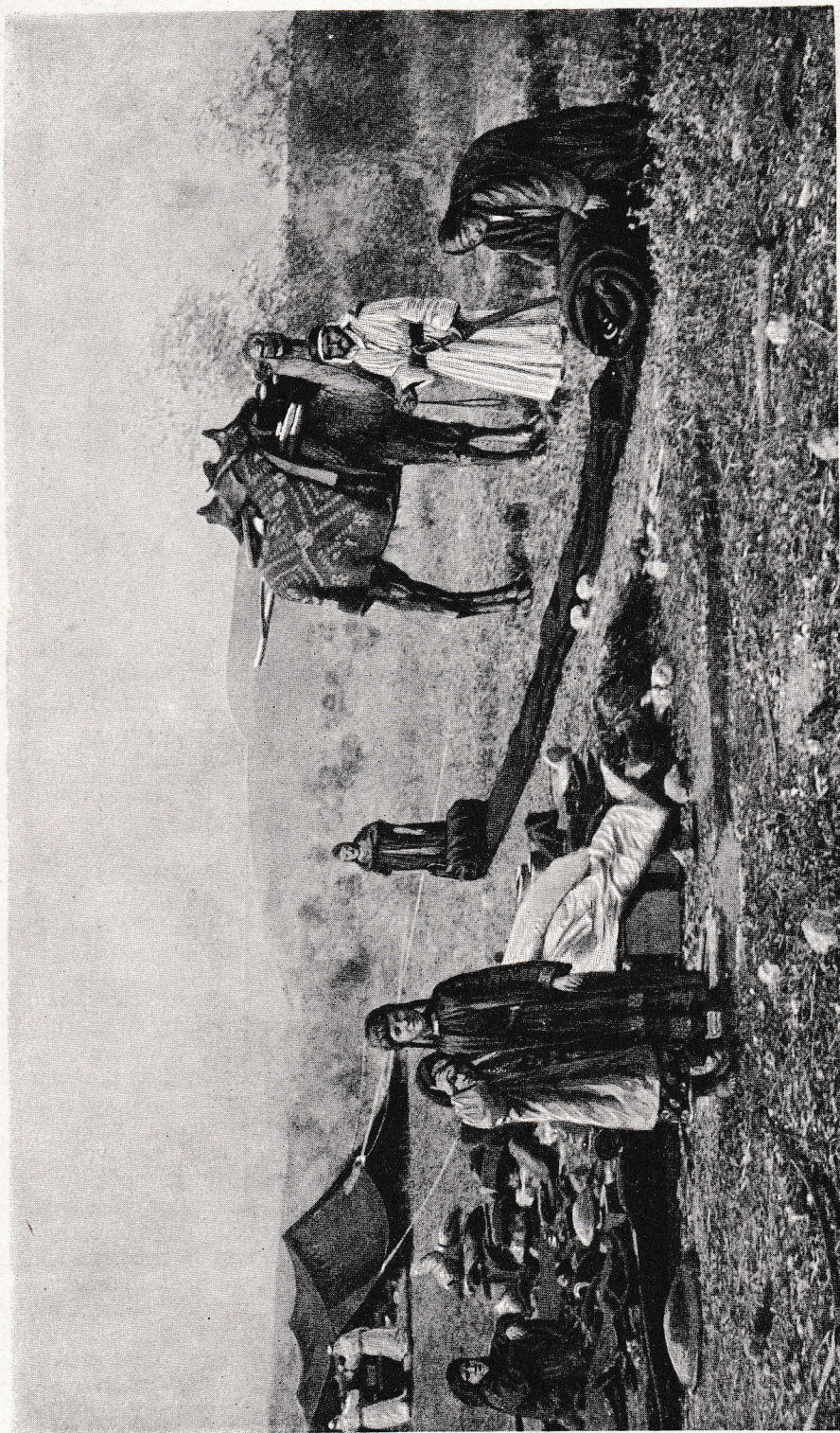
The two curses of Arabia used to be the Turkish tax-collector and the Beduin thief. Now that the rough and greedy hand of the Turk has been forcibly removed, there is a chance that the Arabs who have settled dwellings and lands will emerge from the wretched state in which they have lived, and also that in time the Beduins may be reclaimed from their thieving habits.

Tribes which are frequently on the move enjoy favourable opportunities of carrying off other folks' property. They drive their flocks from pasture to pasture, live in tents, and never stay anywhere long. Without homes, and without clearly recognizing that they have any native land, they are in a state of curious isolation, their thoughts are not as the thoughts of men who dwell in communities upon a fixed spot.

Of religion they have the vaguest notion. A Beduin questioned by a traveller about his conception of Heaven, said: "If God is good to us, if He gives us plenty of food and tobacco, we will stay there. If not, we shall ride away."

Their occupation is camel-breeding, and many of them become camel-drivers. They understand this unattractive animal better than any other race, and they know how to make the most of its value in every direction. As a beast of burden it is indispensable





# BEDUINS ROLLING UP THEIR BLACK TENTS AND CHANGING CAMP EAST OF THE DEAD SEA

The tribe, having exhausted the pasturage for its sheep, is preparing to move towards fresh grass. Two women are rolling up their husband's tent of black camel hair, while the white-robed man stands ready to place it on his camel. In the distance two other men are unrolling a tent. This is a recurrent crisis in Beduin life. The tribe may have to fight another clan for fresh pasturage

*Photo. Underwood & Underwood*





# THE SACRED RITE OF COFFEE-CUP HOSPITALITY IN THE TENT OF A DEAD SEA ARAB CHIEF

Friendly European travellers have arrived in camp, and the dignified hookah-smoking sheikh is having guest coffee prepared. The berries are being pounded in a fine, antique mortar, for roasting over a tiny charcoal fire. After being brought to the boil three times, thickly sugared, and flavoured with otto of rose scent, the coffee will be handed in little cups to the guests as a token of peace

*Photo Underwood & Underwood*



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in a land which is sandy and a climate which is hot. Not even the Arabs think it a comely creature. They give this comical account of its creation: The horse complained to Allah that he was not made for desert journeying. His hoofs sank into the sand, the saddle slipped off his back, he could not reach the scanty grass and small shrubs which grew by the roadside. So Allah designed an animal which had a long neck for reaching after food, cushioned feet which did not sink into the sand, a hump on which the load could be balanced. But when the horse saw this animal it started with horror, and knew how foolish it had been to complain.

It still may be observed how horses shy at the sight of camels, and sometimes can hardly be induced to pass them.

Other advantages which the camel possesses—the result of evolution and the survival of those of the species which were best fitted to lead the desert life—are that it can take in a large quantity of water and go without a further supply for several days if need be; that its mouth is hard inside so that it can eat the thorny plants growing in the sand; that its eyes are protected from the sun by heavy upper lids; and that it can close its nostrils completely against the burning wind known as the simoon. This wind is one



A LADY OF THE LAND OF FRANKINCENSE AND MYRRH

Arrayed in festive attire, with great armlets and bracelets, many necklaces, jewels, and embroidered dress, she proudly shows her face in the shadow of the palm grove. For she dwells in the happy highlands of Arabia Felix, the realm of the Queen of Sheba, rich in beauty and harvested wealth, with vast monuments of architecture reckoned some 3,600 years old

*Photo, J. L. Dixon*





#### HOW MAN DISCOVERED THE ART OF BUTTER-MAKING

You see how it was done. He dangled a skinful of drinking milk by his saddle, and at the journey's end he had both butter and milk. Under their tent these Beduin women have found no better churn than the old, watertight goatskin, which they swing from a tripod of sticks, in patient imitation of the jolting ride that first produced butter

*Photo, Underwood & Underwood*

of the perils of desert travelling. The sky darkens suddenly, a blast which seems to come from the mouth of hell drives fiercely across the sand; camels lie down and stretch themselves on the ground, men must find shelter or risk death. Sand storms are almost as unpleasant, though not so dangerous. The camel's usefulness as "the ship of the desert" would alone give it a

very high value among the Arabs. But it is much more to them than that. From camels' hair they make blankets, tents, rope, and even clothing. They drink its milk, they eat its flesh, they tan its hide for leather. But not even they feel any affection for camels, as we do for horses, and the Indian for elephants, the natives of Spain and Mexico for donkeys, and the Italian for his



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bullocks. Palgrave, who explored Arabia and wrote a famous book, spoke of the camel as "an undomesticated and savage animal rendered serviceable by stupidity alone." The camel, he said, would never attempt to throw his rider, "such a trick being far beyond his limited comprehension; but if you fall off, he will never dream of stopping for you, and if turned loose, it is a thousand to one that he will never find his way back to his accustomed home or pasture."

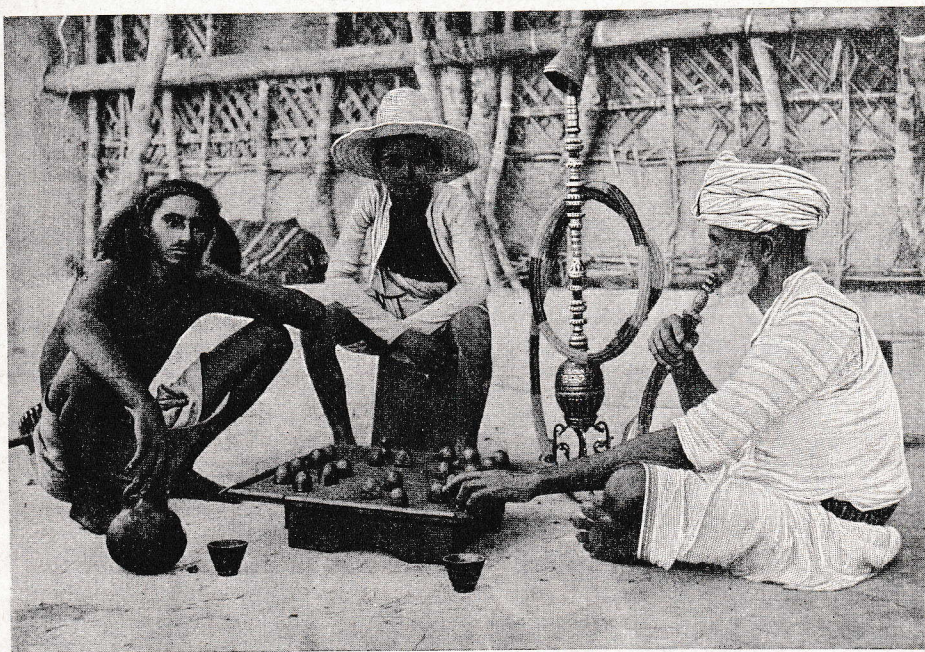
Between the Yemen and Oman lies the desert, still largely unexplored. The coast and the country immediately behind it is called the Hadhramaut. Here the ruling families inhabit huge castles, which, in their construction, resemble children's castles of toy bricks. They are sometimes seven storeys high and cover as much as an acre of ground. They are built of mud bricks and generally whitewashed, so that the principal town, called Shibam, has been

described as looking like "a large round cake with sugar on it."

From this region in past times came vast quantities of frankincense and myrrh. Now there is little of the former left, though in other regions it flourishes still, and keeps up the reputation of Arabia as the land of incense and spices. In Arabia was the country of the Queen of Sheba, who brought both these products of her realm to King Solomon.

North of Yemen is the province called the Hejaz, where lies Mecca, the most famous city in the Mahomedan world. Both the Hejaz and the district of Oman are dealt with under their own headings.

Mecca is believed by the pious to be exactly beneath the throne of Allah, and to be guarded by ten thousand angels. Naturally, superstitions such as these breed intolerance. Courteous as they are by nature, the Arabs seldom rise to that height of good breeding



**MATCH OF WITS BETWEEN A DESERT WARRIOR AND A TOWN ARAB**  
They are playing the old King's Game, derived from India. It is a primitive form of chess, and excites such passion that Arab kingdoms have been staked on the result of one game. The lean, finely-trained desert fighter, who sits so awkwardly upon a balanced stick, is a remarkable modern representative of the early Saracens who rode naked into battle

*Photo, Donald McLeish*





#### SORROWFUL LABOUR AMID PETRA'S RUINS OF JOY AND SPLENDOUR

As this peasant woman turns her little, old-fashioned hand mill, she sees around her that marvellous wreck of Northern Arabian power in the pagan age, which Macedonians and Romans tried in vain for centuries to conquer. Her people are now so lacking in courage that they have to share their crops with the war-like Beduins who control the surrounding desert

*Photo Donald McLeish*

which concedes to all the right to believe what they please. Strict Mahomedans will not even wish good-day to a Christian. "Salaam to all who believe that Mahomet is the true prophet" is their form of greeting. Christians may not dip into Mahomedan wells or rest in the shadow of a mosque. A cooking-pot is considered to be unclean if it has been used by an unbeliever. After a boat has had Christians in it the owner is supposed to wash it all over. A child's game among the Beduins is to draw a cross on the sand and then spit at it.

True, there is some excuse for Mahomedan intolerance in the attitude

which Christians have taken up towards Islam. The earliest missionary to the Moslems told them plainly: "Your religion is false and it must die." That was in the fourteenth century. But that is what missionaries are still saying, not quite so crudely perhaps. Very few of them understand what the faith of Islam is, nor do many who profess it. While it appears to be a form of materialism, it is mystical beyond any other creed.

Allah is to the true Moslem the only reality, the only force in the universe. All men, all angels even, are automata, acting as Allah wills. This is the explanation of the Arab's fatalism, and





#### HAPLESS DESCENDANTS OF THE ANCIENT IMPERIAL ARAB RACE OF NABATHAEANS OF PETRA

These poor, slovenly, Arab women and children are sitting by the famous temple of Ed Deir, cut from the face of the rock in the marvellous fortress city of Petra. Their ancestors ruled practically all Arabia, and controlled the commerce between the Eastern and Western worlds. The poor, oppressed remnant that lives amid the ruins is dominated by the Beduin tribe that exacts toll from European visitors to this wreck of empire

*Photo, Donald McIntosh*





# HOW MODERN YOUNG ARABS ARE PREVENTED FROM LEARNING LIKE THEIR SARACEN FOREFATHERS

This is a typical open-air school in a Southern Arabian town. A fanatic of a reactionary sect is teaching the boys, by frequent use of the cane, to learn by heart long passages from the Koran. The schoolmaster himself knows nothing of modern learning, and as for the old Saracenic wealth of knowledge that enlightened Europe in the Dark Ages, he regards it as wicked, worldly wisdom

*Photo, Donald McLeish*



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of his inertia. What can be the use of striving when one is in the grip of Fate? No man can alter his destiny. None but fools or the impious try. That is what has kept the Arabs low in the scale of achievement. They are clever, brave, trustworthy, but they are in the same condition, speaking generally, as they were ten centuries ago. They seem to have made no effort whatever to change that condition.

### The Flowery Arabic Tongue

What surprises everyone who sees how backward they are in the arts of life as the Western world knows them, and not merely in these, but in cleanliness and common precautions against disease, is the richness and complicated structure of their language. One who learned it wrote that "Arabic grammars should always be strongly bound, because learners are so often found to dash them frantically on the ground."

One feature of it is that it contains large numbers of words all meaning the same thing. Thus there are over eighty names for "honey," five hundred for "lion," and a thousand for "sword." It is not a straightforward language, it is flowery and full of metaphor, it takes roundabout ways to express a meaning rather than the direct way. This often makes Europeans who go amongst them imagine the Arabs are insincere.

### Magnificent Hospitality and Mean Haggling

That impression is heightened by the contrast between their generosity on some occasions and their thrift on others. In the sacred cause of hospitality they do not hesitate to spend extravagantly, to offer guests the best they have without stint. If they have given their word, they keep it whatever the consequences may be. Yet in the ordinary transactions of everyday life they are not ashamed to practise what we should call meanness. They lie, they cheat, they haggle for a long time over a bargain in order to save a very little. Their motive is seldom perceived. It is not greed, but the desire for amusement. They are entertained by getting the better of a neighbour,

an adroit lie is a good joke to them. Life would be dull if they did not exercise their cunning, and they do not see that there is any meanness in exercising it, since everyone is trying to get the better of them.

In the bazaars they spend most of their time smoking and drinking coffee. Anything like hurry they detest and consider foolish as well as undignified. "Be slow about it," is the injunction to an Arab boy going on an errand, where we should say: "Be quick about it." Yet they are by no means slow-witted. Their liveliness and good humour make them keep up a flow of chaff among themselves, and they are eager for information from strangers. Their feelings change quickly. Arab women will be crying over some misfortune one minute and laughing at some absurd little joke the next. The men are trained not to show their feelings, but when they are really excited they soon let it be seen.

### Fantastic Tales of Magic

They are fond of music and they delight in listening to stories. The instrument which the Beduins play is the rebaba, a rough species of fiddle. In the towns the drum is heard frequently; at all feasts, marriages, and circumcisions it must be thumped as a necessary part of the ritual. The music of the Arabs sounds monotonous to Western ears, but it has a haunting charm which consists, perhaps, partly in the circumstances under which it is heard—beneath the stars in the desert, or in a hot noon under the shade of palm trees, or at evening coming up from the narrow street of some little town to listeners on a flat roof, enjoying the cool air.

The stories they delight in are either fantastic tales of djinns and magic and sudden changes of fortune, or they are designed to inculcate the virtues of patience, resignation to the will of Allah, hospitality and faithfulness to promises confirmed by oaths. A promise unconfirmed by oath is not meant to be kept. Stealing is quite permissible, even praiseworthy, so long as the thief plays the game and does not transgress the Arab code of honour, by attacking in the





AN UNORTHODOX LORD OF HOLINESS IN SOUTHERN ARABIA

This powerful personage is the Seyid, Mustapha el Idrisi, a descendant of Fatima, Mahomet's daughter, who married the martyred Ali. He holds to the Shiah reverence for Ali, and is a very influential southern Arab, sharing the unorthodox faith of the Persians, and, with 2,000,000 of his countrymen, rejecting the leadership of the Turkish Sultan of the opposing Sunni sect

*Photo, Donald McLeish*



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dark, for example, or by taking goods entrusted to him for protection.

Women among the Moslems are theoretically the inferiors of men. Arab literature abounds in half humorous abuse of women. Hell is said to be full of them. "Those who have long hair have short wits." "To educate a girl is to throw money away." "Women have seven lives." And so on.

### Where Women do all the Work

But it would be rash to conclude from this that Arabian women are really despised or treated generally with harshness. They do all the work of a Beduin encampment. The men merely look after the camels. Among the settled Arabs they do most of the field work.

The veiling of the face is not practised among the Beduins, or in any of the regions where women have to be out and about all day and must wear a dress convenient to work in. Yet the tents are always divided into two parts—one for the women, the other for the men.

Of the two sexes the male is the more given to vanity and to cultivating personal beauty. Both oil their hair, and among some tribes put on their faces a red powder, through which the oil runs, making streaks here and there. Beduin women dress in blue cotton and cover their heads with a cloth. In the Yemen trousers are worn, fastened at the ankle, and turbans to keep off the sun, or wide-brimmed straw hats.

### Medicines of the Middle Ages

The Arab woman has as large a knowledge of medicinal herbs and simples as the women of England had in the Middle Ages. That is not to say that it is of much value in curing ills, except the very common ones; as for preventing disease by taking sensible precautions, they have no idea of it. In the open air their conditions of life are so healthy that they are seldom ill, but the dirt and defiance of sanitary precept in the towns cause heavy mortality from endemic as well as epidemic scourges. Their use of common remedies might be usefully imitated in more advanced communities. But they believe less in these than in the employment of amulets and talismans.

The surgery of the Arabs is barbarous and could not be practised if they were not able to endure pain stoically. They are as firm believers in "cupping" as were our forefathers in the eighteenth century. Blood-letting is done by barbers, as it once was in England.

Should the barber fail to procure relief, patients call in the services of a hakim (physician), who will very likely tell them to write down certain sentences from the Koran and either swallow the paper, or soak it in water and drink the water so as to swallow the ink in which the sacred words were written.

### Curious Relations of Patient and Physician

Arabs are much inclined to imagine themselves ill, and are given to dosing themselves unmercifully. When they go to the hakim, it would be contrary to medical etiquette for them to tell him their symptoms. He must discover by examination what are their sufferings and what is the cause of them. To be asked: "Well, what's the matter with you?" as he would be by a European doctor, would convince an Arab that the doctor did not know his business and was obtaining money by false pretences.

The dates of which they make a medicinal syrup are one of their principal foods. Date palms grow in almost every part of Arabia; they are finest and most prolific in Mesopotamia. The palm leaves are used for baskets, and the branches, after the leaves have been stripped off, serve as material for furniture and even boats.

There is a large export of dates to European countries and to the United States, and it might be much larger now that the habit of eating them has grown up everywhere. That they are full of nourishment is proved by the number of Arabs who live chiefly on them, with milk, butter, and occasionally mutton, as a treat. Wheat bread and rice are eaten wherever they can be got, and they use also the seeds of a plant called samh. This is said to be not so good as wheat, but better than barley. Fruit is abundant wherever there is water. During the last forty years tea has come into use; it does not show any





**OPEN-AIR BARBER'S SHOP ON THE ARABIAN SHORE OF THE RED SEA**  
 The Turks have been beaten and the land is open to Europeans. The barber cannot yet rebuild his booth, but he has a water-pipe for customers, one of whom is a half-naked, shock-headed desert fighter, who wants to celebrate the Arab victories by having his long hair braided in the middle

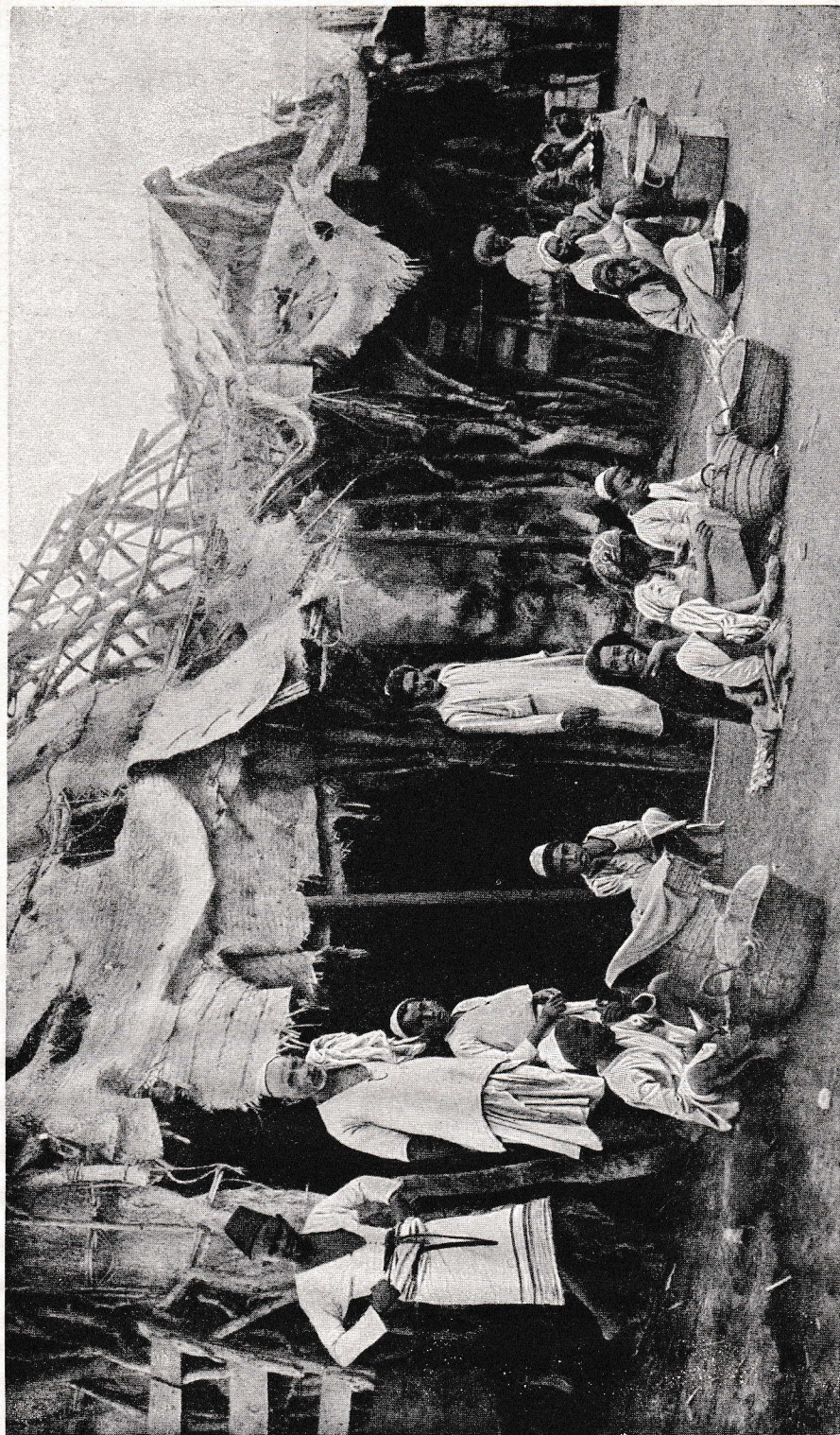
*Photo, Donald McLeish*

sign of displacing coffee altogether, but the Arabs have grown very fond of its mild exhilaration. Mocha is still a great market for the coffee named after it, though none is actually grown there.

Of this vast country, four times as big as France, there still remain large portions unexplored. Twenty years ago it was said: "We have better maps of the North Pole and of the moon than we

have of South-Eastern Arabia." This is true to-day. Probably the unexplored regions are all desert. Now that the Arabs have been freed from the cramping sovereignty of the Turks, there is likely to be more interest taken in their country, and they may welcome strangers more cordially than the Turks did. They will not, it is to be hoped, have so much to conceal.





TURK-RAVAGED TRADING QUARTER IN LOHAYA SEAPORT OF THE FERTILE YEMEN COUNTRY

This is the mean, shabby, rag-roofed trading quarter in Lohaya. One of the Red Sea ports of the Yemen, it came under Turkish dominion, and was liberated during the war. Much of its trade with Arabia Felix was lost, but as soon as the people were free, the old commerce across the desert began to flow again from the almost unknown country north of the capital.



# Arabia

## II. The Growth of the Kingdoms of the Desert

By D. G. Hogarth, C.M.G., M.A., D.Litt.

Author of "The Penetration of Arabia"

*It has been thought best, for the convenience of reference, to omit from this historical outline the independent kingdom of Hejaz, and the sultanate of Oman. Under Hejaz, our distinguished contributor gives a brief but illuminating sketch of the birth and amazing growth of Mahomedanism*

IF Arabia be limited to the peninsula it has little ancient history before the full establishment of the Byzantine Empire. Archaeologists, indeed, know that settled, law-abiding, and literate societies existed in the south-west—Yemen, Aden district, and Hadhramaut—long before the Christian Era, and two of these, the Minaean (Ma'in) and Sabaeans, both centred in the Yemen Jaul, were already organized as regular monarchies in the ninth century B.C.

The Sabaeans, of whom we have learned the names of some thirty kings, are thought to have ruled at the first in North-Eastern Arabia; but in the tenth century B.C. they were at Shirwah, and after the sixth at Marib, conducting caravan traffic in Indian commodities overland with Egypt, and later with the Greek world. They gave place to a Himyaritic state which continued to trade with the Roman Empire.

### The "Spice Road" Two Thousand Years Ago

A Prefect of Egypt, Aelius Gallus, attempted its conquest in 26 B.C., and penetrated to Marib, but, finding fertility and wealth much below expectations, withdrew. Arabia was then left by the West entirely to itself, except for some patrolling of the "Spice Road" by irregular Roman and Nabathæan levies. A caravan track known to Western merchants, but perhaps not travelled by them, crossed to a point on the Gulf.

The prosperity of Yemen declined rapidly from the third century A.D. Arab tradition ascribes its decay to the bursting of a great dam built at Marib by the legendary queen, Balkis. Inscriptions on its extant ruins, however, show that it was in use at a later period. Probably tradition has telescoped the long decay of an immense irrigation system, coincident with whose lapse a steady exodus of surplus population took place.

By the seventh century, Arab tribes, credited with recent Yemenite origin, had spread all over the peninsula to the borders of Mesopotamia and Syria, and some of the Jews—or Judaized Aramaeans—who had pushed long ago down the trade route into Yemen, doubtless came out with them. The final cause of the Yemenite decline, however, was pressure of invasion from

the Abyssinian and Somali coasts, which stimulated a natural Arab tendency to lose grip on civilization.

Some culture survived to the sixth century at Sana, where Abyssinian Christians had overthrown the last Judaized Himyarites with the support of a Byzantine emperor, who desired to secure the Red Sea and Egypt from Persian expeditions and to control the spice trade. To further these ends, Abraha, the Abyssinian Viceroy of Yemen, was bidden to capture Mecca, the only other town then of importance in Arabia, and situated centrally in relation to the Spice Road. He failed in 570, and five years later the Persians were in Yemen, and the Byzantines had lost the gate of the Red Sea.

From the moment of the institution of Islam, a generation subsequent to this date, down to the substitution of the Syrian for the Medinese Caliphate in A.D. 660, the history of Arabia is to be read in the history of Hejaz.

Thenceforward Arabia was to fall outside the main currents of Moslem movement which swung from Umayyad Syria to Abbaside Mesopotamia, or flowed through North Africa to Spain. It had done its world-work. Mecca did, indeed, try to run a caliph of its own, but before the seventh century closed it acknowledged the secular primacy of Damascus, and, with Medina, submitted to be courted or chastised by Umayyads and Abbasides for some three centuries.

### Schism and Heresy in the Home of Mahomet

The historical interest of Arabia lies now in its Legitimist tendencies. Sown broadcast by Kharijites in flight from Abbaside persecution, fostered by Ali's prolific posterity of sherifs, exasperated by Turks, Legitimism developed energy during the later ninth century. What Carmathianism was in Arabia, Fatimism was in North Africa, and Ismailism in Syria. Carmathians of East-Central Arabia, which had been monotheist before Mahomet, abducted the Black Stone in 928, and detached all the peninsula from the orthodox Caliphate. The Fatimites, who came from Egypt to dispute and seize the gains of their former allies, did nothing to diminish the heterodoxy of



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Arabia; and the local control was in the hands of Alid sherifs, Hasanid in Mecca and Yemen, Huseinid in Medina.

Yemen fell under the same suzerainties as Hejaz, but, being more remote, had minded them less. The Zeidite principate of Saadah, in the north, extended itself over all the highlands late in the twelfth century, and transferred its seat to Sana, whence it made nearly all the Yemenite history we know by bickering with the lords of the orthodox lowland. These last, the Rasulids of Zabid, were enlightened men, great founders of religious colleges, and promoters of trade,

Osmanlis, Mahomed abu Numei, may be candidates for their throne. From this epoch dates also the oft questioned hegemony of the western Beduin tribes.

Yemen gave more trouble. Not till 1540 could the Ottoman Sultan send it a Governor-General, nor before 1570 could this officer give any law to the highlands. Sixty years ensued of troubles on land and sea—Zeidite Imams on the one hand and European adventurers on the other; the Turk could rarely reinforce or revictual his troops, and in 1640 he gave up the effort. The Beylerbey, who was styled also "Guardian of the Holy

Places," withdrew to Jeddah, leaving Yemen to recover a prosperity for which it sighs at the present day.

It was, however, Nejd, not Yemen, that gave particular expression to the general Arab distaste for external Moslemism. The fervour of its dour monotheists was revived in the last half of the eighteenth century by the exhortations of one Mahommed Abdul Wahab, and their strength organized by his convert, Saud, Sheikh of Daraiya. Careless equally of the orthodoxy and the heterodoxy of others, they passed from purging the Shi'ite's Holy Cities to cleansing, in 1804, those of Hejaz. The Turks were bundled up to Damascus; the Emir of Mecca had to content himself with Saud's suzerance; and the pilgrimage ceased.

All Islam cried out on the scandal, and the desperate Caliph sent to Egypt a

prayer rather than a command. Mehemet Ali saw his interest in freeing the Holy Places, and equipping a second force, after losing his first, he occupied Medina and Mecca; but not till 1817 did his son, Ibrahim, venture into Nejd to destroy Daraiya and put the Wahabite leader, Abdul Aziz, in bonds.

Though the Egyptians did not kill Wahabism nor establish durable control beyond Midian, but evacuated their last soldier long before Mehemet Ali's death, their occupation served to inaugurate a new order. Ever since the opening of the Overland Route, Great Britain had suspected the activities of the Egyptian friend of France, and in 1839 she pocketed the key of the Red Sea by leasing Aden from the local Sultan of Lahej. By this step, and the attention paid increasingly



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first with Egypt, and latterly with the Portuguese who came round the Cape. Of the rest of the peninsula we know still less. Oman shook off the Caliphate before the eleventh century, and started upon five centuries of autonomy under elective Imams. Nejd seems to have lapsed to Beduin tribalism.

The almost simultaneous advent of Osmanli Turks from the north and of Portuguese (to be followed by Dutch, English, French, and Danes) from the south, recalled Arabia from self-imposed obscurity to the knowledge of a world outside. While Ottoman power could maintain Ottoman prestige, Arabia had little history. The Emirs of Mecca used the peace to consolidate their dynasty so well that, to this day, only descendants of the first Emir who ruled under the



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by the Government of India to Oman and the Gulf shore, Arabia was brought within the scope of European politics for the first time.

Moreover, the Egyptian occupation had so far tamed the Arabs that the Porte was able to re-establish its position in the peninsula. Not only did it tighten its grip on Hejaz, but the Yemen lowland was reoccupied, and even the southern highlands consented to Ottoman suzerainty in 1848, and later to Ottoman occupation.

After another generation, the opening of the Suez Canal enabled Turkey to improve her position still further. In 1872 a Vali was installed in Sana, and the Turks had come down the east of the peninsula into el-Hasa. Though they never succeeded in incorporating Nejd in their Empire, they profited at the end of the nineteenth century by the dominance acquired over it by a greater prince of the Shammar, Mahomed ibn Rashid.

Early in the twentieth century their grip on Western Arabia became firmer through the construction of the Hejaz Railway to Medina. Counter-demonstrations, however, disquieted the Ottoman Caliph. The Zeidites of North Yemen revolted continually, from the 'nineties onward against the presence of his soldiers in the highlands, and the Imam could not be brought to compromise until 1913. A local chief in lowland Asir, Idrisi Sabiyah, threatened to cut Yemen from Hejaz; and Great Britain not only extended her protectorate inland from Aden, but menaced the eastern side by encouragement of Mubarak, the contumacious sheikh of a key-position at Koweit.

The revolutions of 1908-9 at the heart of the Ottoman Empire, and the consequent Italian and Balkan wars, weakened Turkish hold round the periphery. In Arabia, the Imam of Yemen made a supreme effort to recover his highlands, and for a moment reoccupied Sana. A new Emir of Mecca, Hussein, treated his masters with growing contumely. Idrisi tried to capture all Asir, succeeding at first in league with the Imam, but failing later by himself. Abdul Aziz es-Saud, heir of the Wahabite Emirs, who had turned the Rashids out of Riyadh and Kasim in 1902 fell on Hasa, in 1913, and robbed the Turks of the Gulf shore. When the latter embarked in the European War further revolts were to be expected. In Yemen the entente with the Imam held so good that the Turks even invaded the Aden Protectorate, nor could Idrisi, with British support, seriously shake them in Asir.

But these successes were more than counteracted by the success of the revolt of Hejaz. Though es-Saud rendered little service to the British in return for the alliance made with him late in 1915, he definitely detached himself from any connexion with the Ottoman Empire; and so also did the Sheikh of Koweit. The outcome of the war, therefore, is that Turkish dominion has ceased in all parts of the peninsula and has been replaced by principalities of recognized independence.

At present (1921) es-Saud keeps Hasa and the best part of Nejd, but still he dares not come to an issue with Jebel Shammar. The Imam of Yemen sits in Sana, which the Turks have not evacuated, and Idrisi extends his sway in the Yemen lowland, with little prospect of maintaining it

### ARABIA : FACTS AND FIGURES

#### The Country

Arabia (native name, Jezirat al-Arab) is a peninsula in S.W. Asia, between Red Sea and Persian Gulf. Approximate area, 1,000,000 square miles; population estimated at between five and six millions. Consists of (1) large areas of desert, partly occupied by nomadic Beduins, largely unexplored; (2) oases of central part and fruitful coast districts

#### Divisions

Central oases and coast districts are occupied by eight independent communities, of which kingdom of Hejaz and sultanate of Oman are most important, and are dealt with elsewhere. Others are as follow:

Emirate of Nejd and Hasa, Central Arabia and Persian Gulf. Population about 250,000. Capital, Riyadh. Present emir, El Aziz es-Saud.

Emirate of Jebel Shammar, north of Nejd. Population about 200,000. Capital, Hail. Present emir, Abdullah ibn Mitah.

Principate of Asir, on west coast between Hejaz and Yemen. Population about 1,000,000. Capital, Sabiyah. Present emir, Mohammed ibn el-Idrisi. Asir highland tribes are independent of the emir.

Imamate of Yemen, on south-west coast (anciently known as Arabia Felix). Area about

75,000 square miles. Population estimated 1,000,000; previously part of Turkey in Asia Capital, Sana. Chief ports, Mocha and Hodeida (40,000). Present Imam, Mohammed Hamid ed-Din.

Sultanate of Koweit, on north-west coast, Persian Gulf. Population, estimated 50,000. Capital, Koweit. Present sultan, Ahmed ibn Jobar

Emirate of Kerak, in north, east of Dead Sea, otherwise known as Transjordan. Emir Abdullah, son of King Hussein of Hejaz.

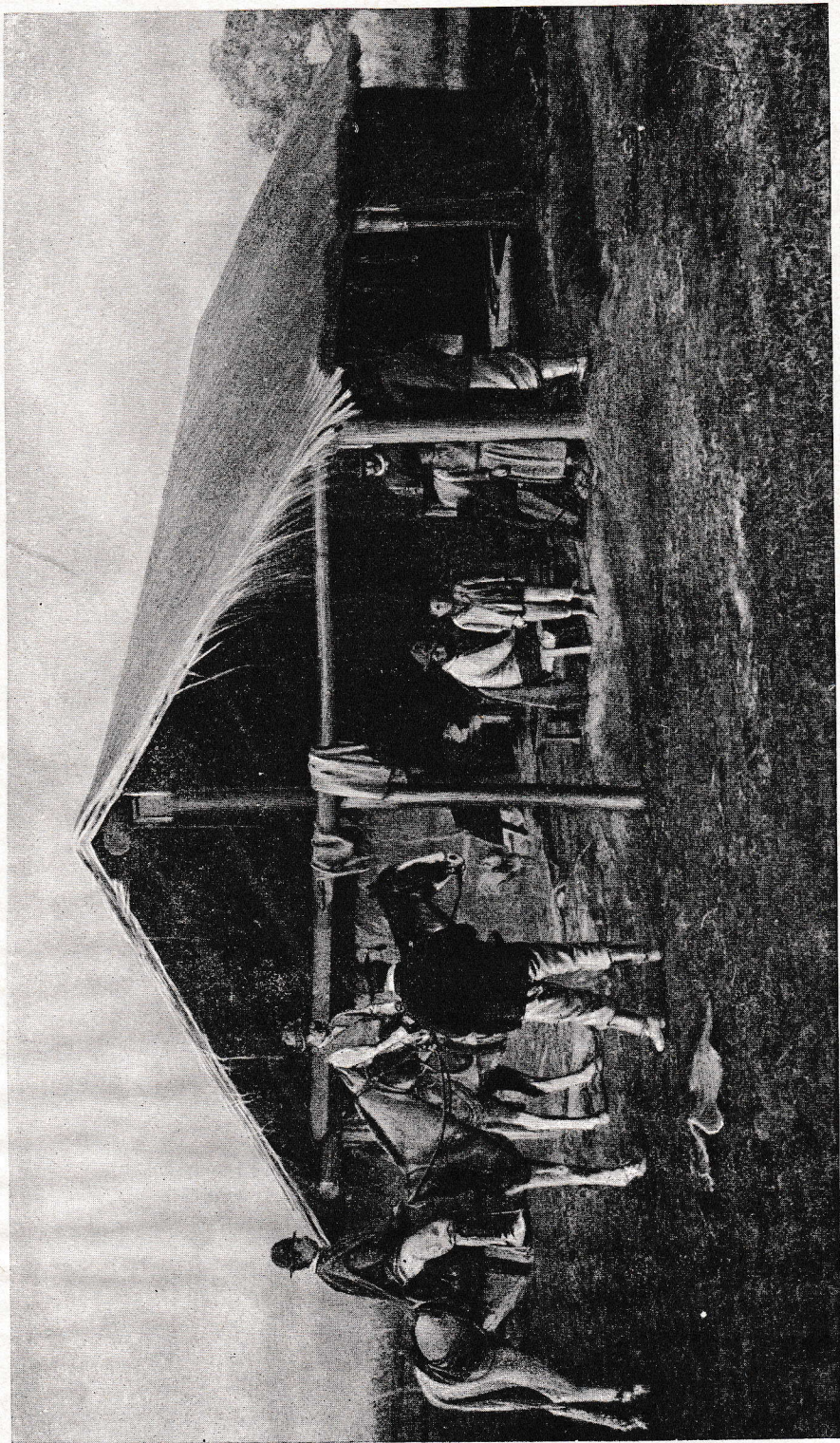
#### Products

In Nejd, Shammar, and south and east coasts date palms are prolific, and supply chief means of existence. Arab horses are famous for fine breeds, of which best come from Nejd. Considerable flocks are reared in oases and fertile coast tracts; parts of desert plateau also give good temporary pasturage after rainy season. Maize, wheat, barley, cotton, coffee, sugar, and spices are grown in humid valleys of the Tehama (general name for western coastal tract).

#### Communications

Only Hejaz railway, line from Hodeida to Sana, in Yemen, and the pilgrim roads, one from Hasa on Persian Gulf, and another from Egypt, to Mecca.





A FRIENDLY CALL FROM NEIGHBOURING GAUCHOS IN THE HEART OF THE PAMPAS  
Although the stream of hidalgo blood runs very thin in the gauchos of the Argentine Republic, these rude cattlemen of the boundless pampas are not devoid of certain little courtesies, but so habituated are they to horseback, that even when making a friendly call on a neighbour so near as fifteen or twenty miles away, they will remain in the stirrup. The gaucho standard of domestic comfort is not high, as this photo bears witness